

The Brethren Evangelist

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TERMS

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LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 10.

(Editorial)

Encouraging the Builders.—Haggai 2: 1-9

1 In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying,

2 Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3 Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

4 Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts:

5 According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.

6 For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

7 And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

9 The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

Introduction

In the last lesson we learned how the foundations of the temple were laid amid great rejoicings. It was not long however until discouragements came, as is always the case when God's people undertake a great work which looks towards religious reform. The event attracted the attention of the surrounding nations and evoked great opposition. From twelve to fifteen years were lost in this way. This lesson tells about the resumption of the work.

The Text Explained

Verse 1. About seven weeks before this the first message came to Haggai and was delivered to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the prince and the priest, and reproved them for their tardiness in rebuilding the temple. The people had time to build fine houses for themselves, but neither money nor time for the Lord's house. Haggai commanded them to get material and build the house, promising that the Lord would be with them. The people, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua, obeyed the divine command and the work was resumed. Almost four weeks later, and

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about one month after the work had been begun, the message of today's lesson came with its special encouragement.

Verse 2. The words were delivered to Zerubbabel, the prince in command of the people, governor of Judah. He was to lead the people in the work of rebuilding the house of the Lord. Joshua is the same as Jeshua in the last lesson. The "residue" or "remnant" refers to the little company which had returned from captivity, but a fragment of the whole body of the captives who were in Babylonia.

Verse 3. It is now almost seventy years since Solomon's temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and it is probable that but very few aged men present had seen the former house in its grandeur and magnificence.

Verse 4. The Lord thru the prophet exhorts not only the leaders to be strong, but the people also, and gives as a reason that the Lord would be with them, and therefore the work would prosper. The prophet urged them to be brave and cheerful. God's presence even with the smallest human strength and resources, is guarantee of success.

Verse 5. The promise or covenant referred to is that God would be with them, that they should be his people, and that he would be their God. With these promises there was no reason why the people should be discouraged, however great the work might be, or whatever the opposition might be.

Verse 6. Compare this with the prophecies in Zechariah 1: 11, 14, 15, 21; 2: 7-9. The prophet foretells that in a little while there will be great convulsions and upturnings among the nations of the earth. Isaiah 13: 13; Joel 2: 10.

Verse 7. The Common Version here expresses a very beautiful thought, the Desire of all nations referring to Christ. Such he was when he came, the desire, the satisfaction of the nations. But the better rendering is that of the Revised Version, "The desirable things of all nations shall come." That is, the "desirable things" being the things needed for the building of the temple. Hence in verse 8 we read that the silver and the gold are the Lord's. The meaning is that God will shake the nations and the desirable things of the nations, the things they hold as most desirable, such as gold and silver and precious metals, shall come and the house of the Lord shall be filled with honor and glory. The gold is the Lord's and the silver is his. It is his to dispose of as may best serve his purposes. They are his and therefore he can dispose of it as he will.

Verse 9. "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." The "house" is regarded as the same from Solomon's time to Herod's. Formerly the glory consisted very largely in the material, the outward grandeur and magnificence. But the latter glory shall be chiefly spiritual. If the prophecy is made to refer to Christ then we have a fulfillment in his coming. He is the glory of the church on earth today, and will be the light and the glory of the heavenly temple.

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Lesson Applied

1. *Encouragement.*—The Lord loves to encourage his people. He does not like to see them despondent and cast down. And thus it is that he sends to them messages of comfort and good cheer. The people who had returned from captivity were greatly discouraged. They met with much opposition in the work of rebuilding the temple. The work was great, the laborers few, many were indifferent, and as a result the people were disheartened. Then the Lord sent his servant with a message of comfort and good cheer. The people were encouraged and continued the work. We too need encouragement, and while the Lord does not come to us as he came to these people, yet we can turn to the Bible and there find a message of comfort, cheer and encouragement. We have the promise of Christ's presence, and his sweet and comforting words, "Fear not."

2. *I Am With You.*—This is a precious promise and one which should keep every Christian from discouragement. Compared with the former building the present temple was as nothing. But there was one feature which the people had overlooked, God was with them. He said, "Yet now be strong and work, for I am with you." Two things are to be noted here. First the people were to be strong and work. That is the condition of the promise, "I am with you." We must not forget that we have a part to perform. The Lord will not do for us what we can for ourselves. What he asks of us is to do what we can, work and be strong, all the rest he will do. No matter how great the work may be or what the opposition and the difficulties in the way, it is our business to do what we can, and leave the results with the Lord. He will be with us, and with his presence we must succeed.

Heart Talks On the Lesson

Selected.

The temple was not finished in a day; neither is spiritual character completed in the hour of conversion. Discouragements, apparent defeat, sore trials of faith, beset these builders on every hand.

The temptation to be on too friendly terms with those who are not God's people comes to everyone who begins in earnest the Christian life. The world says, "Let us be friends; we think as you do; we believe in your God; we consider it a good thing to join the church. But there is no use in drawing lines between us as if we were heathen and you the only people God approves of. Don't be narrow; let us all work together as if there were no distinctions." But notice that it was the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin who reasoned so. The Bible says, "Whosoever will be the friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Ye cannot serve two masters." "Choose ye whom ye will serve." The builders met this difficulty successfully because they had discernment and decision—two things necessary to save us from this "snare of the devil." It is one of his most specious devices which we must not be ignorant of. The builders saw